

TOURISM IN CENTRAL EUROPE: A COMPARISON OF THE REGIONS OF POLAND, HUNGARY, CZECH REPUBLIC, SLOVAKIA AND SLOVENIA WITH OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES IN YEAR 2000

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Abstract

This article analyses the evolution of foreign tourism in Central Europe during the period 1991-2002, in comparison with other EU countries, and the distribution of foreign and domestic tourism at regional level in Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia, as well as in the Baltic countries and in two East European countries: Bulgaria and Romania . After an upwards trend for 1991-96, the real value of receipts per inhabitant from foreign tourism in Central Europe have decreased during the period 1996-2002, but there are perspectives for further increases in the next years. Towards a regional development policy in these countries the positive effects of foreign and domestic tourism should be had into account, together with other relevant factors, in order to increase employment and reach real convergence with the EU average.

JEL Classification: O52, O57, R1, R12, R58

Key words: Tourism in Europe, Central Europe, Transition Countries, CEEB countries, Regional Development

1. Introduction

As it has been shown in previous research or regional development, tourism has an important role to play in this regard, particularly in regions with a high ratio between the number of tourists and regional population, such it is the case of Balearic Islands in Spain which is the most outstanding case of regional development based on tourism in European Union. Here it is analyzed the evolution of tourism in five Central European Countries (CEC5), in the post-communist

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period. The new socio-economic and political circumstances of Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia after 1990 have had important economic effects on the degree of openness to foreign trade of goods and services, with positive impact for economic development. Here it is analyzed the evolution of foreign tourism in these countries for the period 1990-2002, and the regional distribution of foreign and domestic tourism in these countries as well as in Bulgaria and Romania.

Section 2 analyses the regional distribution of foreign and domestic overnight stays in Central and East Europe and Baltic countries. Section 3 presents a comparison with the 50 most outstanding regions of EU15 in this regard, in year 2000, section 4 analyses the evolution of tourism from foreign origin in Central Europe and finally section 5 presents the main conclusions.

2. Regional distribution of overnight stays in CEEB countries

Williams and Balaz (2000) state that the economic transition has created new forms of regional inequalities; tourism is one of the mechanisms contributing to this rise in regional divergences, creating winners and losers in the twilight of socialism. The losers have been those regions more reliant in domestic markets, which collapsed during the sharp contraction, decreasing the incomes, and which started to suffer from the competence which had been restricted in the past. The hardest hit regions were those more dependant on the Eastern Europe markets. Tourism can also contribute to regional restructuring through its impact on the GDP and the employment, but its role depends also on the weight that it has in the economy of the region, and in the interrelations with other sectors within the region.

Changes both in the national and international demand have affected differently the regions of CEEB countries, the economic recession in all the former socialist economies made the relative winners those countries/regions capable of attracting more international tourism, such as those regions with historical ties with nearby prosperous regions, and a strong potential to develop new markets.

Tables 1 to 4 present tourism indicators in the regions of CEEB countries, in year 2000, together with the ranking positions among the 50 regions of this study. The variables under study are:

- onsx and onsn, are the number of overnight stays from in hotels and similar establishments in the region, in thousand people: onsx from foreign origin and onsn from national origin.

- onsxh and onsnh are the corresponding number of overnight stays per one thousand inhabitants.

The ranking positions are indicated with the initial r followed by the name of the variable. In Guisan, Aguayo and Carballas(2006) it is included also the ranking position by square kilometre.

Table 1. Main tourism indicators in Bulgaria and Romania: 2000

Region	onsx	onsn	onsxh	onsnh	ronsx	ronsn	ronshx	ronsnh
<i>Bulgaria</i>								
Severozapaden	6	68	11	116	50	50	50	48
Severen Tsentrallen	58	335	48	273	46	41	41	33
Severoiztochen	4004	692	2981	515	3	24	2	18
Yugozapaden	585	546	273	255	21	33	21	35
Yuzhen Tsentrallen	196	836	95	404	35	20	36	23
Yugoiztochen	1272	300	1543	364	10	42	5	26
<i>Romania</i>								
Nord-Est	166	1043	44	273	39	16	42	32
Sud-Est	490	4388	167	1495	25	1	29	1
Sud	176	1308	52	377	38	10	40	24
Sud-Vest	53	1591	23	662	47	7	49	12
Vest	219	1584	107	775	33	8	34	9
Nord-Vest	239	1783	84	626	32	5	37	13
Centru	384	1983	145	750	29	3	31	11
Bucuresti	574	390	251	171	23	38	23	41

Notes: onsx=overnight stays from foreign origin, onsn=overnight stays from national origin (own country)); onsxh and onsnh=corresponding values per one thousand inhabitants. Rankings for these variables are presented in the last columns, Source: Own elaboration from REGIO database, EUROSTAT.

In table 1, Severoiztochen and Yugoiztochen in Bulgaria and Sud-Est region in Romania are the outstanding regions in these countries. The pulling attraction is all of them is the Black Sea coast. The two Bulgarian regions rank among the top in the foreign overnight stays, while the Romanian one ranks the first among the 50 regions under review.

In table 2, Prague with 6.4 million of overnight stages from foreign origin is outstanding, and it ranks the first among the 50 regions of CEEB in this regard. In Hungary we find an outstanding position for Közép-Magyarország, where Budapest attracts the most of the tourists coming from abroad, and for those regions around the Balaton Lake, such as Nyugat-Dunántúl.

Table 2. Main tourism indicators in the Czech Republic and Hungary: 2000

Region	onsx	onsn	onsxh	onsnh	ronsx	ronsn	ronsxh	ronsnh
<i>Czech Republic</i>								
Praha	6451	663	5435	558	1	26	1	16
Střední Čechy	653	637	588	573	18	30	12	15
Jihozápad	856	980	727	832	14	17	11	7
Severozápad	2110	1195	1864	1056	6	11	3	4
Severovýchod	1814	1960	1218	1316	7	4	8	2
Jihovýchod	772	831	465	501	16	21	16	20
Střední Morava	579	1191	467	961	22	12	15	5
Moravskoslezsko	413	1058	323	826	27	14	19	8
<i>Hungary</i>								
Közép-Magyarország	4384	949	1541	334	2	18	6	29
Közép-Dunántúl	592	555	535	501	19	32	13	19
Nyugat-Dunántúl	1523	1179	1548	1198	8	13	4	3
Dél-Dunántúl	1006	732	1032	751	12	23	10	10
Észak-Magyarország	207	744	163	587	34	22	30	14
Észak-Alföld	502	690	330	454	24	25	18	21
Dél-Alföld	191	470	142	351	37	36	32	28

Notes: See table 1.

From table 3 we would like to emphasize the outstanding position of Estonia and Slovenia in foreign tourism, ranking both of them at

the top 10. Slovenia is also among the top national tourist destinations.

Table 3. Main tourism indicators in Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Slovenia and the Slovak Republic: 2000

Region	onsx	onsn	onsxh	onsnh	ronsx	ronsn	ronsxh	ronsnh
Estonia	1423	489	1037	357	9	35	9	27
Lithuania	672	293	182	79	17	43	28	50
Latvia	837	638	345	263	15	29	17	34
Slovenia	2879	1715	1448	863	4	6	7	6
Slovak Rep.	2761	2843	511	527	5	2	14	17

Notes: See table 1.

Table 4. Main tourism indicators in Poland: 2000

Region	onsx	onsn	onsxh	onsnh	ronsx	ronsn	ronsxh	ronsnh
Dolnoslaskie	588	923	198	310	20	19	26	30
Kujawsko-Pomorskie	108	362	52	172	41	40	38	40
Lubelskie	72	266	32	119	43	44	47	47
Lubuskie	124	246	121	241	40	46	33	36
Łódzkie	107	423	40	160	42	37	44	43
Małopolskie	869	1407	269	435	13	9	22	22
Mazowieckie	1121	1044	221	206	11	15	24	38
Opolskie	45	101	42	93	48	49	43	49
Podkarpackie	65	262	31	123	44	45	48	46
Podlaskie	62	169	51	139	45	48	39	44
Pomorskie	424	659	193	300	26	28	27	31
Ślaskie	195	636	40	131	36	31	45	45
Świętokrzyskie	43	223	33	168	49	47	46	42
Warmińsko-Mazurskie	410	539	279	367	28	34	20	25
Wielkopolskie	327	661	97	197	31	27	35	39
Zachodniopomorskie	358	376	207	217	30	39	25	37

Notes: See table 1.

In table 4, none of the Polish regions is among the top leading tourism destinations, neither in foreign, nor in national tourism, with the only exception of Malopolskie in the variable onsn, in top 10th position. Thus, our recommendation is that this activity should be promoted considering its positive effects on the economic development.

Regarding top ranking positions in foreign tourism, we would like to underline the outstanding first position of Prague, both in total onsx and onsxh. The second position in overnight stays from foreign origin per one thousand inhabitants lies on Severoiztochen in Bulgaria. Közép-Magyarország has also a leading position based on the relevance of foreign tourists. For the national tourism, the picture is somewhat different. The Sud-Est region ranks the first among the fifty considered. Severovýchod is on the second position in ronsnh, while on the third we found Nyugat-Dunántúl.

3. Comparison with other European regions

Tables 5 and 6 present data for year 2000 of top 50 European Union regions, by the number of overnight stays from foreign origin per thousand inhabitants: 38 corresponding to EU15 countries and 12 to Enlargement countries.

Table 5. Overnight stays per capita from foreign origin in top regions. year 2000: EU15 countries

	Region	onshx	ronshx
Austria	Westösterreich	13570	8
	Südösterreich	3525	15
	Ostösterreich	2304	25
Belgium	Bruxelles	4107	13
France	Île de France	3348	17
	Corse	3315	18
	Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur	2335	24
	Alsace	1498	37

	Midi-Pyrénées	1402	39
	Basse-Normandie	986	48
	Bourgogne	976	49
Greece	Nisia A. +Kriti	28308	2
	Kentriki+Attiki	2183	26
	Voreia Ellada	1259	41
Ireland	Ireland	4620	12
Italy	Trentino Alto-Adige	16432	6
	Valle d' Aosta	5372	11
	Veneto	3484	16
	Toscana	3021	19
	Lazio	2929	21
	Liguria	2003	28
	Emilia Romagna	1751	31
	Friuli-Venezia Giulia	1295	40
	Campania	1158	43
	Umbria	1141	44
Luxembourg	Luxembourg	2669	22
Netherlands	West-Nederland	1698	32
Portugal	Alentejo+Algarve	13804	7
	Açores+Madeira	9287	9
	Lisboa e Val do Tejo	1585	33
Spain	Baleares	61938	1
	Canarias	19083	4
	Cataluña	3907	14
	Andalucia	2628	23
	Com.Valenciana	2132	27
	Madrid	1081	45
UK	South-East	1882	29
	Scotland	961	50

Table 6. Overnight stays per capita from foreign origin in top regions. year 2000: EU Enlargement countries

	Region	onsxh	ronsxh
Cyprus	Cyprus	22121	3
Malta	Malta	18463	5
Bulgaria	Severoiztochen	2981	20
	Yugoiztochen	1543	35
Czech Rep.	Praha	5435	10
	Severozápad	1864	30
	Severovýchod	1218	42
Estonia	Estonia	1037	46
Hungary	Nyugat-Dunántúl	1548	34
	Közép-Magyarország	1541	36
	Dél-Dunántúl	1032	47
Slovenia	Slovenia	1448	38

Source: Own elaboration from REGIO database, EUROSTAT.

From tables 5 and 6 we compare the position of CEEB regions with EU-15 in foreign tourism. The more prominent regions for tourist intensity of foreign origin are Baleares and Canarias in Spain, Nisia Aigaiou+Kriti in Greece, Trentino-Alto Adige in Italy, Westösterreich in Austria and Alentejo+Algarve in Portugal. Cyprus and Malta are again at the top positions of this ranking. Prague is the only region of the CEEB countries that is situated in the first positions of the ranking of top-50 European regions, with 5435 overnight stays per thousand inhabitants in 2000. It also indicates that, in relation to foreign tourism, the position of CEEB is even better, with ten regions in the top-50, Prague, Severoiztochen, Severozápad, Nyugat-Dunántúl, Yugoiztochen, Közép-Magyarország, Slovenia, Severovýchod, Estonia, and Dél-Dunántúl.

In the next section we analyse the evolution of receipts from foreign tourism in Central Europe.

4. Evolution of receipts from foreign tourism in Central Europe

During the last decade of the 20th century tourism evolve positively in CC5 countries, with important increases which have had a positive impact on economic development and employment. As seen in Guisan and Aguayo(2002) the indicators of tourism activity has an important positive impact on regional development and employment in EU15 regions, and it is expected that tourism will be also very important in this regard in Central Europe, particularly in the regions more outstanding in this regard.

Table 6 presents the receipts per inhabitant from foreign tourism of Central European countries in 1990-2002. The most outstanding levels in year 2002 correspond to Slovenia with 560 dollars per inhabitant, Hungary with 325 and the Czech Republic with 287, while the values of Slovakia and Poland are clearly below.

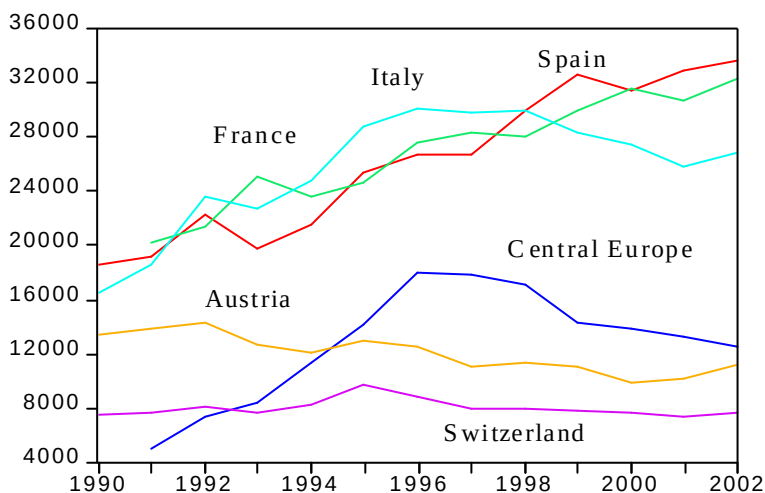
Table 6. Receipts per inhabitant from foreign tourism
(current dollars)

obs	Poland	Hungary	Czech Rep.	Slovakia	Slovenia
1990	9	79	41	13	380
1991	73	97	69	26	145
1992	107	119	109	40	355
1993	117	114	151	73	387
1994	160	138	216	106	479
1995	171	284	278	116	568
1996	219	347	395	125	648
1997	225	370	354	101	616
1998	206	357	376	91	566
1999	158	350	307	85	498
2000	158	340	290	80	498
2001	125	373	303	118	519
2002	117	325	287	134	560

Source: Own elaboration from WB(2004) for receipts and Maddison(2004) for population.

Graph 1 presents the evolution of receipts from foreign tourism, in millions of dollars at current prices in the group of 5 Central European Countries in comparison with Austria, Switzerland, Spain, France and Italy, according to Guisan, Aguayo and Carballas(2004 a). In the case of Central Europe we notice a high increase during the period 1990-96 and a diminution afterwards probably due to some economic crises in the countries of origin of tourists which could be overcome in the next years. The source of data is WB(2004).

Graph 1. Receipts from foreign tourism in Central Europe and other EU countries (million dollars at current prices)

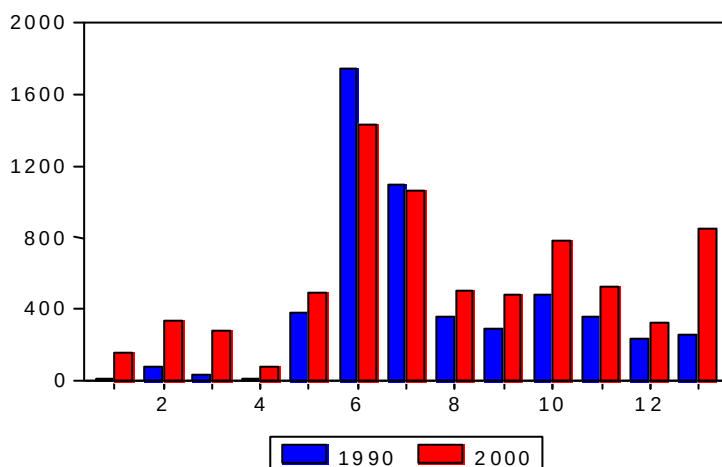


For the group of 5 Central European countries foreign tourism receipts evolved from 2392 in 1990 to 13782 million dollars in 2002, what in per capita terms supposes an increase from 36 to 208 US dollars at current prices per inhabitant. Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic are the countries with the highest levels of receipts from foreign tourism among the five countries of Central Europe, but the total of this group has yet values lower than Spain, Italy and France.

Graph 2 shows the values of receipts per inhabitant in the group of 5 Central European countries in comparison with several countries of

Western Europe, and table 7 presents the figures corresponding to this graph. We notice that in spite of the increase in foreign tourism receipts, experienced by Central Europe during the period 1990-2000, the values of this variable per inhabitant are yet very low in comparison with Austria, Switzerland and other Western European countries. In per capita terms Slovenia is the most outstanding country of the group of five Central European countries, with a level similar to those of France, Italy and Portugal but below Spain, Greece, Switzerland and Austria.

Graph 2. Foreign tourism receipts in several EU countries, 1990-2000 (current dollars per inhabitant)



Note: The order of countries is: 1. Poland, 2. Hungary, 3. Czech Republic, 4. Slovakia, 5. Slovenia, 6. Austria, 7. Switzerland, 8. France, 9. Italy, 10. Spain, 11. Portugal, 12. UK, and 13. Greece.

We think that there is an important potential development of this economic activity which could increase substantially the receipts per inhabitant in Central European countries, which could have positive impact on employment in several sectors, particularly in building and services, as well as other beneficial effects on economic development, with an increase in the capacity to finance imports of other goods and services which have a positive impact on

manufacturing and non manufacturing activities, having into account the inter-sector relationships analysed in Guisan, Aguayo and Carballas(2004a,b).

Table 7. Comparative data of receipts from foreign tourism

	Foreign Tourism Receipts (millions \$)		Population (thousands)		Receipts per inhabitant (current dollars)	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
<i>Central Europe</i>						
1.Poland	358	6100	38119	38646	9	158
2.Hungary	824	3424	10372	10139	79	338
3.Czech R.	419	2869	10309	10272	41	279
4.Slovakia	70	432	5263	5408	13	80
5.Slovenia	721	957	1896	1928	380	496
<i>Total CC5</i>	2392	13782	65959	66393	36	208
<i>Other countries</i>						
6.Austria	13417	11440	7729	8012	1736	1428
7.Switzerland	7411	7581	6796	7184	1090	1055
8.France	20184	29900	56709	58892	356	508
9.Italy	16458	27439	56719	57762	290	475
10.Spain	18593	31000	38851	39466	479	785
11.Portugal	3555	5206	9899	10008	359	520
12.UK	13762	19544	57561	59766	239	327
13.Greece	2587	9221	10161	10918	255	845

5. Conclusions

Receipts per inhabitant from foreign tourism in Central Europe have evolved from 36 dollars in 1990 to 208 in year 2000. In spite of the increase, the figure for CC5 in year 2000 is rather low in comparison with the most outstanding European countries: Austria 1428, Switzerland 1055, Greece 845 and Spain 785. Slovenia and Hungary are the most outstanding countries among the five Central European ones. The positive impact of tourism goes beyond the direct effect on services and in this regard several regions of CC5 countries have important possibilities of development.

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